

Illegal Human Migration: Socioeconomic re-integration challenges in North**Gondar Zone, Northwest Ethiopia.**

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Abstract

Illegal migration is a global phenomenon that is growing in scope, complexity and impact. It is a threat to Ethiopia in general and North Gondar in particular being one of the hot-spots of the country's rout of migration via Ethio-Sudan. The objective of the study was to assess the socio-economic challenges of the returned illegal migrants. Using purposive sampling, qualitative data is collected from 20 in-depth interviews and 10 focus group discussions with returnees and key informants in selected five districts in North Gondar Zone, Ethiopia. The data is analyzed by thematic analysis using Nvivo software. The results indicated that the main causes for migration of the returnees is family poverty and looking for better life. However, they faced serious challenges in their way and in their countries of destination. With regard to asset accumulation, most of the returnees reported that, they returned back empty handed and they are facing multi-faceted challenges in the re-integration processes. Weak management of the reintegration process; returnees' low interest to work in small business enterprises; excess expectation; and getting interest in unproductive businesses are made the re-integration process difficult. Thus, the socio-economic re-integration of the migrants needs strategic intervention; and strong coordination and collaboration of stakeholders.

Keywords: Illegal Migration, Challenges, Re-integration, North Gondar**Introduction**

International migration is a global phenomenon that is growing in scope, complexity and impact. Today, virtually all countries in the world are simultaneously countries of destination, origin and transit for international migrants. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) broadly contextualized illegal migration as irregular migration. To IOM, irregular migration is "movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries (IOM, 2011).

Many migrants, particularly those who are in an irregular situation and those working in precarious sectors, encounter human rights violations; labor exploitation, including poor working conditions and low wages; trafficking and sexual abuse; violence; lack of social protection; discrimination; and xenophobia (UN, 2015).

As the result of civil war in Yemen thousands of Ethiopians are evacuated and faced challenges. Xenophobia in South-Africa also highly affected Ethiopian migrants. Cruel and mass massacre has also executed on Ethiopian migrants in Libya by the terrorist militants (ISIS) in 2015.

As IOM reported, "due to changes in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's foreign workers legislation [in 2013] and the subsequent crackdown on irregular migrants, tens of thousands of Ethiopian migrants have been brought to Ethiopia in what is known as the most colossal airlift the world has ever witnessed" (IOM, 2014).

According to IOM, interviewed the returnees from Saudi Arabia 'things might be better for the men; but as a woman most of us who travel through the 'illegal' means face a lot of difficulty and this often involves rape and physical abuse' (Ibid).

As to the documents from IOM, "more than 8,500 migrant child returnees registered from the total of over 160,000 deportees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia last year" (Ibid). According to local documents, the mass evacuations of Ethiopian from Saudi Arabia were more than 165,000 national

level and 43, 625 in Amhara region and 470 from North Gondar Zone including Gondar town. (Compiled from Amhara regional state, North Gondar Zone, Gondar town Administration Labor and Social Affairs offices reports, 2015)

The returnees from the Saudi Arabia have been warmly welcomed and promised to be reintegrated into their community by different supports. Most of the deported illegal migrants were able to get, accommodation and handout onward transportation allowance for them to get back to their place of origin with the support of the Ethiopian government and humanitarian aids (IOM, 2014).

Even though there were some attempts made to reintegrate returnees, it doesn't seem uniform and there are destitute people who could not able to reintegrate into their society effectively rather, some of them are returned back illegally; faced psycho-social problems; confused what to do; leading a miserable life; and become hopeless.

As Ethiopia introduced a law to temporary ban migration in 2013, illegal migration increased. More importantly, the illegal migrants who were forced to evacuate from Saudi Arabia in 2014 were faced challenges in the reintegration process. But, there is a gap on studying the challenges of the reintegration process. Most of migration studies in Ethiopia are dominantly emphasis on the cause and consequence of migration, and little emphasis is given to assess the challenges in reintegration process and to look the possible ways and documenting success stories of returnees. Therefore, this research gives due emphasis to assess the problems and re-integration challenges in North Gondar Zone, Northwest Ethiopia and to forward some possible ways out.

Methods

Qualitative research was conducted to collect relevant data on the situation of the returnees. A cluster sampling technique was employed to select five sampled districts in North Gondar Zone and Gondar Town Administration. Using purposive sampling, qualitative data is collected from 20 in-depth interviews and 10 focus group discussions with returnees and key informants in selected five districts. Thematic analysis using Nvivo software was used as the main method to analyze the qualitative data collected. Here below are presented the detailed themed analysis about the reasons for migration, challenges faced, reasons for returning, socio-economic reintegration process and challenges, current situation of the returnees, expectation, need and area of interest.

Findings and Discussions

Reasons for Migration

The migration process of many of the returnees was illegal which was made with the help of brokers. Also, the returnees' lived experience was explained as an awful situation of their life where they see many ups and downs on their way as well as their stay in their respective destinations. As the interviews conducted with some of the returnees, in short, their reason to choose migration was because they were jobless, poor and in need of improved life. While the role of brokers found immense in facilitating way out strategies, destinations and working opportunities. The reasons for migration explicitly related to economic problems. Hence there are also personal reasons like disagreements with family members, conflict with others, and marital separation.

A female speaker who is a returnee from Saudi Arabia stated that she was involved in exodus and illegal migration with the help of brokers. She reasoned out that the cause of such life is poverty; losing any option of changing her life to betterment and decided to work in Saudi Arabia cities as a housemaid. In fact, before she chose to go outside, she was working as housemaid here in Gondar. But the salary could not change her future life and she was not able to accumulate money for the things she wants to be engaged in.

Another female discussant who lived for seven years in Saudi also reasoned out that she was jobless and went in searching for a job. During her stay, she was working as a housemaid and during the revelation, the police went to the house where she was working and took her to the jail where many Ethiopian prisoners imprisoned.

Challenges Faced

Many of the returnees faced various challenges in their journey and their stay in different working environments. One of the female interviewee said, she faced terrible situations starting from her departure from home city up to her return to Ethiopia. In her words, she expressed that “living in the homeland has its own freedom for everything” realizing the awful & painful situations of trafficking as well as working in Arab countries. It can also be said that the female returnees differently encountered sexual violence and harassment problems.

According to different interviewees and focused group discussants indicated that, the challenge started from searching for or borrowing money from different sources. Then it goes serious in their journey, particularly if they are illegally escaping. This can be explained by the situation of going days and nights on foot, nothing to eat and drink, no shelter to take rest rather sleeping on the trees, the communication to brokers especially female migrants mostly passed the routes raped either by brokers or male migrants. In addition to this, migrants faced sickness and death. It is internationally and nationally reported that many of the migrants passed away while they are in containers, ship, and died of hungry. Then after many challenges, those who arrived will be entered in various jobs where the stay of many migrants will be in conflict with their employer due to different reasons. We can understand the horrible situations of illegal migration from the returnees:

As sourly expressed by a female returnee from Saudi,

I was raped repeatedly starting from the Ethiopian brokers. Even in Saudi three men living in the same house, raped me; however, before I left I took family planning injection and that protected me from pregnancy. Though I had faced high bleeding in my stay, I was working day and night. My employer used to order me to go to other relatives' house to work when I finish her household tasks. When I sleep, they only leave me for ten minutes, then I get up and started to work. I was so exploited. I remember one day I sat down to watch television; the son of the employer brought knife to me and switch-off the TV.

A male interviewee from Aymba also told how he went paying 37,000br for the help of brokers. As he expressed, he faced many ups and downs even with the weather conditions of the Riyadh city. As the revelation rose before two years in the city, he got violent situations where he was highly injured of his right hand as well as imprisoned. He also expressed that he got many Ethiopians in the jail who came from Tigray & Oromo regions.

To see the challenging route of migration, we can see another male interviewee as follows:

First I went to Sudan via Humera illegally, and I stayed there for a year. I decided to Saudi with my friends and paid 25,000br to brokers. It was very long way where we found it challenging, finished our money and food. After we crossed the sea, we found another brokers and they arrested us for 15 days. They need money from us to pass their area; they were ready to kill us. Since we were bare handed, we called to my friend's elder sister who is living in Sudan to send us money. She sent us 45,000br and we paid for brokers, we also paid 10,000br for other brokers at the border of Jiga. Generally we spent one month and six days which was very horrible time. Then we reached Saudi, employed in water irrigation works by 3500br. I collected the money and send back to my friend's sister who lend us the money we paid on our way.

Reasons for Returning

It is nationally known that some of the returnees came due to the revelation raised against the illegal residents. Most of them are caught by police, jailed and deported to their country in 2013E.c.

This situation continued to the year 2014. The Ethiopian government was appealing the different governments of Arab countries where Ethiopian migrants residing or under control to get back to their country.

We can understand the situation as explained by one of the interviewee as follows;

.....I strongly worked for ten months and collected 70,000br, but unfortunately I heard information about migrants to get out of the city within two days. Immediately I was under control and took to Medina city where we stayed two months and 15 days in prison. My belongings like cloth, mobile phones, and other household properties estimated 30,000br and all my money (70, 000br) took by Arabs. I lost all what I had and returned to my country empty-handed. I can't express how much migration is outrageous.....

Similarly, a female returnee who totally denied her labor payment during her stay as housemaid, "I asked them repeatedly to pay my salary, but they were saying 'we paid you while you were in Ethiopia' and finally police caught me and became a prisoner till I deported to Ethiopia. My father sent me money to come from Addis to here."

As indicated above by the speakers, the reason of many returnees is the hasty turbulence and revelation; hence few returnees finished their contracts still others came due to sickness, frustration and expectations from the government to provide suitable working situations following the painful motion on the citizens.

Socioeconomic reintegration Process

At national level the welcoming of the returnees by higher officials done at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport; as of their arrival the returnees received red coupon and 900br for transportation. Besides this, some of them who extend their trips to regions have got facilitated service from Addis to their respective places. Then at regional level, the returnees registered and went to their respective cities. In their sub-cities and local districts, the returnees also called and registered by the local districts administrators and micro-finance offices. In their meeting with the responsible bodies, promises entered to adjust the returnees like giving initial money by loan, creating enabling environments for group small business works, piece of working land and particularly to Dembia Zuria district promised to provide piece of land to build houses.

A female returnee in Aymba expressed as it has been four months since she came and started to communicate concerned bodies to get working spaces and initial capital. But she didn't get anything and her expectation was unmet.

A returnee in the Lideta sub-city strongly expressed her feeling like, *"the district officials always call us for meeting but failed to provide solutions which are at their hand. They couldn't actualize in practice what they have promised previously."*

Reintegration challenges

As some of the officials in districts, and micro-finance offices expressed they found the reintegration process very difficult in that there are also graduate jobless youths in which they are expected to support. Also, they are in problem of treating returnees who are highly ill-treated and abused other than those who came finishing contracts. So, in the four sub-cities found in Gondar, those

returnees who received red coupon are meant in need of immediate support and tried to give containers for group. However, the microfinance officials explained that the returnees do not want to work in groups expecting conflict of interests among themselves. Giving for individual returnees' initial money or container shop is not seen as manageable by micro finance experts.

As we found out, some of the returnees are getting various trainings in collaboration with technical and vocational colleges. The problem is following the training; the returnees are not given seed money or well-studied working opportunities. Moreover, officials explained about the situation of the returnees as their expectation is very high, instable and in need of high class working opportunities.

One of the officials said the following, *"most of the returnees have had high expectations which made them to feel instability and psychologically disturbed. What we think to provide them is not attuned to what they need."*

In addition to this, another respondent in Abajale sub-city explained that most of the returnees chose to be engaged in services related works or small businesses rather than showing interest in manufacturing or urban agriculture related works. This situation created a great challenge for them to settle the returnees as expected. Hence, to reduce the problem of joblessness amongst returnees, they decided to give some shades which are built in the sub-city for transformation-focused marketing purposes like finished food item products. As he also explained, those who are interested to work in groups got loan service from global fund and other possible sources.

Current situation of the returnees

Psycho-Social

Psycho-social problems are broader that needs to be independently studied. Hence there are some returnee as well as official respondents who underlined the need for psycho-social interventions. When we see the sources for this problem, it starts from thinking/ involving in illegal migration by itself, goes through the odd experiences of migration on the way before their arrival, facing the new life, high loaded tasks, mistreatments by employers or others, health disorders....etc. that extended to their homecoming situations affecting their whole being while rejoin their families and society. The existing situations of most returnees seemed instable, unmet needs, dissatisfaction, and feeling desperate. Here are some reflections from returnees:

A Female discussant from Abyzgi sub-city upset by the situation of giving shop for some returnees and ignoring others including her. It is two years passed since she came from Saudi having her three children. At this time she lives with her parents facing daily nagging with her mother and even crying.

She sourly said:

"Migration is really better than mistreatment in our homeland. I decided to return again, feeling desperate and losing tolerance. I am really psychologically disturbed; why we cry for dead people? Crying should be for us who are living not better than the dead. It is better to die than living like us. We were told many things to adjust the ways to improve our life, but promises are on air. I tell you I will go back again to Saudi because I should raise my children".

One of the officials from Lideta sub-city underlined the need of interventions on returnees' psychological adjustment and the benefits of working in groups as "most of the returnees have had high expectations which made them to feel instability and psychologically disturbed. They even don't want to work in groups. They all need individual support, how can we render this? Interventions or trainings in their psychological adjustment and the need to work in team is found basic." It is becoming a big assignment for them trying to make adjustments of their resources and returnees' need.

Economic Condition

Regarding the economic condition of the returnees, there are some returnees who came with little money or not at all. There are also other returnees who sent money to their families to build houses or to save the money. However very little number of the returnees started to work by what they have after they came back. As we understood from the interviewees, most of them lost their money as they are payment denied of their labor, and during deportation. We can see this condition from the following returnees' speech,

A female returnee said "I worked there as a housemaid and after six month of my employment, I asked for my salary but they didn't give me. I asked them repeatedly to give me my salary, but they were saying "we paid you while you were in Ethiopia." and finally police caught me and became prisoner till I deported to Ethiopia. My father sent me money to come from Addis to here"

A male returnee from Saudi also expressed as, "I was under control and took to Medina city where we stayed two months and 15 days in prison. My belongings like cloth, mobile phones, and other household properties estimated 30,000br and all my money (70, 000br) took by Arabs. I lost all what I had and returned to my country empty-handed"

On the other hand, one of the female returnee explained that though she came empty handed, she got the money from parents what she used to send them that enabled her to start work, "*I was sending money to my family while I was in Saudi; hence I came bare handed from jail even didn't have extra clothes to change. But my parents gave me 30,000br and started to work small business by renting shop around Arada. Now I am forced to stop my business because of the high tax and renting payment of the shop.*"

Health

As we can understand from the response of the returnees, most of them had headaches, sleeping disorder, eating disorder, backaches, bleeding(women) kidney problems and physical injuries. A female returnee said,

A male interviewee from Saudi also explained the physical injury he faced like this, "As the revelation rose before two years in the city, I faced violent situations where I was highly injured and mal functionality of my right hand as well as wounded on my back." Also, one of the female returnee told she was taken to hospital by her employer to check her kidney status. This wasn't due to sickness, but they wanted her kidneys. Now she is facing kidney related health problems in which she requested free treatment.

Expectation, need and area of interest

Most of the returnees expected better socio-economic reintegration especially in their respective sub-cities. Their expectations are provision of seed money, piece of land for working or living, container shop and these all on individual basis. As respondents reflected on the solutions to their problems, they forwarded "container for shop and initial money or piece of land for dual purpose will enable us to live and work."

Concerning issues of working in a team or association, they said that it is impossible to work in group because of the fact that people have their own needs/interests which makes them disagree during working or sharing of profits. Nevertheless, in some sub-cities and district microfinance offices, those who can be in groups will get priority in getting money by loan and containers. A question asked for the micro finance head if there is any criteria set to the give support; the head expressed that efforts made to enable working environment as of returnees' arrival. They also prioritize for those who are willing to use their capital and work in group.

In districts, like Koladiba and Chilga piece of land is provided to returnees for house and shop building. Hence, in Koladiba they are asked money up to 11,600br. "Land for constructing houses is provided in groups, but we are asking to pay 11, 300br. And we are requesting to make 6400br like the practice of other districts."

A female discussant who lived for eight years in Saudi also pointed out some of the activities that they can do, especially in market linkages like baking *injera*, bread, and sandwich and food item end products like shiro, berbere and the likes. It is also explained that Dembia has a good situation to create job like modern honey-bee, ox fattening, vegetable/fruit production, etc. since there is very good water availability, and plain land.

The advisor of the chair in Lideta sub-city replied that they give identity cards for the returnees if they have a red coupon that is given as of their arrival. In his speech he said that "*what we think to provide them is not attuned to what they need.*" It is becoming a big assignment for them trying to make adjustments of their resources and returnees' need. Additionally, there are also many youths who want jobs in the sub-city and this makes difficulty to enable working environment for the returnees as immediate as possible. They found very awkward to group those youths with the returnees to work.

As the way forward given by the chair, he pointed out that it is better to work on returnees based on their interest, facilitating enabling working environment like loan, working spaces and container. Furthermore, strengthening trainings for returnees on timber & ironware related works, end products of garments & dresses.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The majority of the returnees were young females (88.5%) and most of the returnees' reason to choose migration was related to economic problems; because they were jobless, poor and in need of improved life. The migration process of many of the returnees was illegal which was made by the help of brokers. Concerning the problems faced, many of the returnees were challenged starting from searching for or borrowing money from different sources.

Also, the returnees' lived experience was explained as an awful situation of their life where they see many ups and downs on their way as well as they stay in their respective destinations. Most of the returnees came due to the revelation raised against the illegal residents in which they caught by police, jailed and deported to their country in 2013.

As some of the officials in districts, and micro-finance officials expressed they found the reintegration process very difficult in that there are also graduate jobless youths in which they are expected to support. Besides, they are in problem of treating returnees who are highly ill-treated and abused other than those who came finishing contracts. Hence, those returnees who received red coupon are meant in need of immediate support and tried to give containers for group. However, the microfinance officials explained that the returnees do not want to work in groups expecting some disagreements among themselves. Giving for individual returnees' initial money or container shop is not seen as manageable by micro finance experts.

Some of the returnees are getting various trainings in collaboration with technical & vocational colleges though the returnees are not given seed money or well-studied working opportunities following the training. Most of the returnees chose to be engaged in services related works or small businesses rather than showing interest in manufacturing or rural/urban agriculture related works.

This situation created a great challenge for the government to settle the returnees as expected. Hence to reduce the problem of joblessness amongst returnees, they decided to give some shades

which are built in the sub-city for transformation-focused marketing purposes like finished food item products.

Despite the warm welcoming and promises enter by national, regional and local officials' promises are unmet. The existing situations of most returnees seemed instable, unmet needs, dissatisfaction, and feeling desperate. Most of them lost their money as they are payment denied of their labor, and during deportation. Most of them also experiencing headaches, sleeping disorder, eating disorder, backaches, bleeding (women) kidney problems and physical injuries.

Hence, it is better to work on it based on their interest and trainings by facilitating enabling working environment like loan, arranging interest free loans to the Muslim returnees and working spaces. Furthermore, strengthening trainings for returnees on timber and ironware related works, and products of garments and dresses. Generally, organized and tangible support from various stakeholders is found at the heart to keep them from going back to migration.

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